UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/544
19 June 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 19 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic on 19 June 1998 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Eldar KOULIEV
Permanent Representative

98-17486 (E) 190698 190698

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Annex

[Original: Russian]

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Azerbaijani Republic

On 17 June 1998, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Mr. Vartan Oskanian, at a press conference during which he explained Armenia's approach to settling the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, mentioned the possibility of incorporating the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic into Armenia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic sees this statement as an undisguised call to the international community and an unjustified attempt to dictate conditions for the settlement of the conflict to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and to its member States co-chairing the Minsk Conference, which has been entrusted, pursuant to United Nations resolutions, with the task of reaching a comprehensive settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In this connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic welcomes the practical and constructive response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to the statement by the head of the Armenian diplomatic corps, as explained in a statement by the Director of the Department of Information and Media Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Rakhmanin. In presenting the Russian Federation's position on this problem, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation characterized Mr. Oskanian's statement as "an act of political blackmail that will hardly contribute to an understanding between the two parties to the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh". He also pointed out that such statements would find no support in the Russian Federation or in the international community.

We believe that there is no reason why negotiations should not be resumed between the duly authorized representatives of the parties in the context of the OSCE Minsk Group. The question is not what kind of structure the negotiations should have, but rather, most importantly, the bases on which these negotiations should take place, as was also pointed out in the statement by the Director of the Department of Information and Media Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Such a strong reaction of principle as that of the Russian Federation to Mr. Oskanian's remarks is a positive factor that facilitates a balanced assessment of the positions of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Accordingly, Azerbaijan feels that the failure of the three countries co-chairing the Minsk Conference to respond in any way to the counter-productive and provocative statements made by the head of the Armenian diplomatic corps could give a false impression as to the Co-Chairmen's firmness in upholding the mandatory rules of international law in their mediation efforts.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan has a right to expect an unequivocal reaction from the other States co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Conference

with regard to the remarks made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, which would leave no doubt as to their intention to base their actions on the principles confirmed by the States members of OSCE at the Lisbon Summit, held in December 1996. The Azerbaijani party believes that the factors which have led to a review of the question of the structure of future negotiations - a structure which initially was not in conformity with OSCE decisions - have a very negative impact on the Co-Chairmen's efforts to move forward with the process of peacefully settling the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan intends to demonstrate a constructive approach in the context of this process of peaceful settlement of the conflict, which it believes is the only possible approach, and requests the Co-Chairmen to accelerate their efforts to bring about positive changes in the position of the party which is blocking the progress of the Minsk process.

Baku, 19 June 1998